

In the inner desert

132 the word *rabi'* does not signify a season of the year; it is
 805 therefore impossible to translate it by the word spring, as
 we may when we are dealing with the settled and cultivated
 territories. The *fellāhin*, inhabitants of the cultivated terri-
 821 tories, enjoy the *rabi'* from year to year, and, as it always
 132 begins at the same season, the *rabi'* for them signifies the
 spring. The angel Ġibrin, who rules over the rain clouds, likes
 neither the Rwala territory nor the desert; therefore he spreads
 his wings over them, so that it rains there only in narrow strips,
 i. e. where the rain slides off his wings. On the contrary, when
 he flies over the territory of the *fellāhin* he folds his wings as
 close together as possible, and then the rain falls everywhere.
 On his journey over the desert Ġibrin beats the clouds to make
 them fly the faster, but over the settled territory he leaves
 them in peace and it rains abundantly there. The teachers of
 the Koran in explanation of this conduct of Ġibrin say that
 he is angry with the Bedouins because they disregard the in-
 structions which he imparted to the Prophet (Mohammed).

132 If the earth is not thoroughly soaked by any of the
 137 autumnal rains, then there is no *rabi'*; *al-arz allī mā tinwa-*
 511 *sem mā terābbe' muḥtiye*. The abundance, *rabi'*, is also greater
 and of longer duration if the ground, after its soaking by the
 autumnal rain, is visited in addition by an abundant *smāk*
 rain. Then the whole steppe and even the desert are trans-
 formed into a delightful meadow. Every valley and piece of
 low ground or gentle slope, all the plains composed of fine
 red sand, as well as the rifts and heights are at once covered
 with an infinite variety of annuals and perennials. The camels
 231 nibble at the greatest dainties only and grow so fat that they
 511 can hardly move. The milk often flows or drips from the
 udders of the she-camels, which are full to overflowing; the
 mares and foals roll about in the thickest grass and the Bed-
 ouins, men, women, old people, and children, have more sweet
 or sour milk and camel's fat than they know what to do with.
 Moreover, they have the hope of a sure profit in selling the
 superfluous old or sterile she-camels to the 'Aḳejl buyers, who
 pay well for fat animals. In a territory where there is a *rabi'*
 tents can be seen scattered all around. With plenty of good
 [233] pasture close to their tents the herdsmen do not drive their
 camels far out. Pure cold rain water can be found in every
 515 low-lying place, rock crevice, and hole in the river beds. Every
 one bathes, the clothes are washed, and parasites of all kinds

251 The chaff, *kīšr*, which floats on the top is then thrown away,
 262 while the clean seed are spread on blankets and allowed to
 dry. Or the Bedouins lay the filled sacks when still moist in
 the sun, shake them until the seed fall to the bottom, throw
 away the chaff, and clean the seed once more, so that they
 may serve as an article of food in a poor season. This is
 called *semhne* or *sebīb*.

137 The fertility, or abundance, *rabī*, depends entirely on a
 511 luxuriant growth of the grasses, or annuals, not on that of
 the woody plants, or perennials. The latter become green even
 132 after a good *ṣejfi* rain, when the earth is well watered, *maṣ-
 jūfa*; but no *ṣejfi* rain can relieve the annuals, for the heat
 of the sun soon burns them. In the same year one tribe may
 have no *rabī* at all, while another tribe, even a neighboring
 one, has abundance of everything. This difference is the more
 noticeable when the tribes are enemies. Of such a year they
 say: "This year has queer teeth; men live well (have some-
 thing to bite into), and men die of hunger; *hāḡi-s-sene w-laha
 snūn nās ja'īšūn w-nās jemūtūn.*" The Bedouin also refers
 to a *rabī al-māš*, meaning a season when the entire growth
 consists of solitary grass patches insufficient to feed even
 the youngest camels; a *rabī aṣ-ṣafāra*, when nothing grows
 except the *ṣafāra* with its yellow blossoms; a *rabī ad-dimne*,
 when the grasses, though they may have sprouted and grown
 luxuriantly after the *wasm* and *ṣitwi* rains, fail to receive the
smāk rain and become yellow as early as the end of March;
 a *rabī an-naṣṣḡān*, when all the plains and lowlands are thickly
 carpeted with grass; and, finally, a *rabī aṭ-ṭaṣṭa*, when not
 only the lowlands but all the slopes, as well, afford luxuriant
 pasture.

137 Just as the Bedouins long for the *rabī* years, so they
 fear the years of want, or *ḥawa'*. If for two or three years
 132 the rains in the autumn months have not been copious enough,
 731 there are no grasses and the camels must live on the woody
 plants alone. The winter rain, *aš-ṣitwi*, makes these perennials
 swell, but during the hot *smāk* days they dry up, become un-
 palatable to the camels, and thus the actual *ajām al-ḥawa'*,
 or days of want, set in, a period in which many camels perish.
 But if the rains of the *ṣejfi* also fail, then not a single peren-
 nial shoots up, last year's offshoots fall to pieces, to be broken
 and scattered by the wind, and the region soon changes into

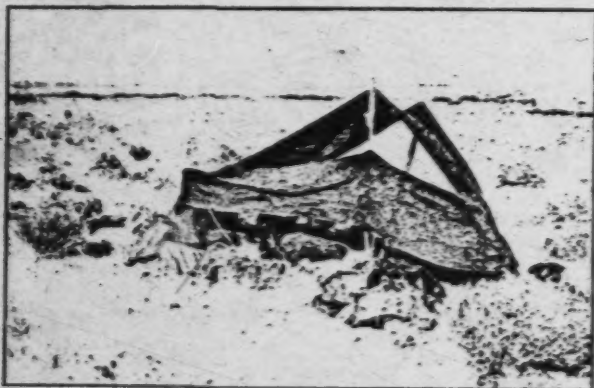
FOOD

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Instead of wheat the poorer of the Rwala obtain white sorghum, *dera' bêza'*, which costs half as much and can be used in exactly the same way as wheat. From it they bake bread called *ṭurmud*, boil *'ejš* known as *raḏiza*, roast the grains to *ḥamisa*, and eat the plain flour as *lehme*.

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FIG. 24—A small tent, *ḥuz* (see p. 72).

Semḥne or *sebib* is the seed of the different varieties of *semḥ* plant. It takes the place of both wheat and *dera'*, and from it food can be prepared in exactly the same way as from these. Those who have no other food and neither taste the seed of the *ad-da'â* variety of *semḥ* nor eat the *al-ḥawica'* herb, even though they may be tormented by hunger, are generally regarded as being hardy; *ḥwa walad mâ dâḥ ad-da'â' w-lâ akal al-ḥawica' jôm ḡâ'*.

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LOCUSTS, DATES, SALT, WATER, EDIBLE PLANTS

For the poorer Rwala locusts, *ḡerâd*, are an important article of diet. The large green varieties often cover shrubs by the myriad and do not move till the dew has evaporated. The Rwala women come and throw handfuls of locusts into large bags, tie them up, dig a narrow, deep trench, *bûra*, and make a fire in it. When the bottom of the trench is covered with glowing ashes they shake the locusts into it, shouting: "Father of roasting, roast them! *jâ-ba-l-ḥmes eḥemseh*." The dead locusts are dried in the sun and either ground immediately

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291 wrap the feet around with rags, *ḥaṣwa* (pl., *ḥaṣāwi*). The young chiefs buy shoes, *ṣurmāje*, of the kind worn in the towns. The riders wear boots of fine red leather, *žazme* (or *ǧazme*), with high shoe irons made of rolled sheet iron, *ḥaḍw*. The best of all are the *žazme ḥalabijje* (Aleppan *žazme*); the cheaper kind is called *niswānijje* and is generally of a yellow color. *Žazme* reaching to the knees are called *rabbāṭijje*.

Those who can afford it buy a short coat, not unlike our waistcoat, made of a many-colored thin cloth, either unlined, *nussijje*, or lined, *derfil*.

291 The yearly expenditure of a common Rwejlī for his clothing is as follows:

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<i>ḥaḥw</i> , body belt	$\frac{1}{4}$	<i>meḡidijje</i>	(\$ 0.22 $\frac{1}{2}$)
<i>ṭowb</i> , shirt	1	"	(" 0.90)
<i>zeḥān</i> , outer shirt	1	"	(" 0.90)
<i>maḥram</i> , outer belt	$\frac{1}{4}$	"	(" 0.22 $\frac{1}{2}$)
<i>ṭāṭijje</i> , cap	$\frac{1}{4}$	"	(" 0.22 $\frac{1}{2}$)
<i>mindil</i> , kerchief	$\frac{1}{4}$	"	(" 0.22 $\frac{1}{2}$)
<i>'aṣāba</i> , kerchief cord	$\frac{1}{4}$	"	(" 0.22 $\frac{1}{2}$)
<i>'aba</i> , mantle	3	<i>meḡidijjāt</i>	(" 2.70)
<i>farwa</i> , fur coat	3	"	(" 2.70)
<i>serbāl</i> , shoes	1	<i>meḡidijje</i>	(" 0.90)

Total... 10 $\frac{1}{4}$ *meḡidijjāt* (\$ 9.22 $\frac{1}{2}$).

In addition to this his *obṭijje*, short fur coat, costs him 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ –2 *meḡidijjāt* (\$ 1.35–\$ 1.80); his *kzāza*, white kerchief, $\frac{1}{4}$ *meḡidijje* (22 $\frac{1}{2}$ cents), and his *nussijje*, short coat, $\frac{1}{2}$ *meḡidijje* (45 cents).

291 In winter the Rwejlī puts on all the clothes he has, thinking that otherwise he would never get warm. A proverb says: "He who does not put on heavy clothing will not get warm by carrying it, *alli mā jeṭaṭṭel mā jenaṭṭel*."

WOMEN'S CLOTHES

A woman (Fig. 34) wears a dark-blue shirt or dress, *ṭowb aswad*, with broad sleeves ending in a long lappet. The shirt fits close to the neck and is about one meter longer than the wearer. Nearly every woman sews it herself, two pieces, *bejramtān*, of cotton fabric each eight *ḡrā* (6 meters) long being necessary for a shirt. The ordinary fabric is called *masfiba*, the better sort *abu rwēše*. A woman's shirt is without any decoration. It is held to the body by a broad belt

DRESS AND WEAPONS

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wad slightly, they touch the *kohl*, which is kept in a tiny tin box, *mikhale*, and then rub the color along the borders of the eyelids, believing that the use of *kohl* strengthens the eyesight. Many therefore even rub *kohl* on the edges of a telescope, being firmly convinced that the instrument then gives a much better view.

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The woman's dress costs:

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<i>barim</i> , body belt	1/2	<i>meḡdijje</i>	(\$ 0.22 1/2)
<i>ṭowb</i> , shirt	2	<i>meḡdijjât</i>	(" 1.80)
<i>ṣudḡi</i> , belt	1/2	<i>meḡdijje</i>	(" 0.22 1/2)
<i>maḡrûna</i> , kerchief	2	<i>meḡdijjât</i>	(" 1.80)
<i>ṣiṣṣa</i> , head band	1/2	<i>meḡdijje</i>	(" 0.22 1/2)
<i>ḡibba</i> , jacket	2	<i>meḡdijjât</i>	(" 1.80)
<i>maṣwi</i> , cloak	3	<i>meḡdijjât</i>	(" 2.70)
<i>maḡnaḡa</i> , coral necklace		4 piasters	(" 0.18)
<i>ṣelâde</i> , pendant		4 "	(" 0.18)
<i>ma'das</i> , elbow ornaments		4 "	(" 0.18)
<i>ṣaṭṭa</i> , finger ring		4 "	(" 0.18)
<i>amâm</i> , nostril ring	1/2	<i>meḡdijje</i>	(" 0.22 1/2)

Total...10 *meḡdijjât*, 16 piasters (\$ 9.72).

PEDDLERS; CARE FOR PERSONAL APPEARANCE;
INFANTS; STAFFS AND CANES

Whatever the Rwala need for their finery and ornaments they either buy from the merchants who visit them when they are camping in the settled territory in the months of July and August, or from the peddlers, who accompany them the whole year through, even going to the inner desert with them. A peddler or wandering merchant is called either *Rhejbâwi* or *Kubejsi*: *Rhejbâwi* after the ancient town of ar-Rahba, *Kubejsi* after his native place, the little town of al-Kubejsa. The terms *Rhejbâwi* and *Kubejsi* have come to mean any wandering seller of textiles or general merchandise and are now applied even to merchants known to hail from other places. Thus a peddler from Bagdad is called a *Rhejbâwi* *Barḡādî* or *Kubejsi* *Barḡādî*. When a youth overfond of dress, *dḡān*, visits a wandering merchant to be measured for a suit of clothes, he gives his order in the words of the ancient verse: "Measure me, O merchant! for a shirt with long sleeves, measure me, O merchant! O *Rhejbâwi*! *Fappol li ja tāḡer ḡāfi ardāni fappol li ja tāḡer ja rhejbâwi*."

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233 stray beast to come back to its place. Often the lost she-camel joins another herd, goes with it to the camp, moans when she does not hear the familiar voice of the herdsman, and moves towards him as soon as his ditty catches her ear. In case the stray animal is not in the camp, the owner and his friends mount their horses and ride out the same evening to hunt for it. If it is not found, they return the next day before noon, saddle their female riding camels, and the search begins anew. During their absence a member of the owner's kin rides up and down the camp every evening shouting: "Who has seen such and such a she-camel?" If someone happens to have seen her, the usual answer is: "O thou who hast lost a she-camel, know that she is at So-and-So's." No one would ever keep such knowledge to himself. A stray or lost she-camel is called *dāheba*, the man who has lost her, *medheb*.

[789] Although sucking, young camels are constantly threatened with danger from many beasts of prey, mainly wolves, the herdsman cannot always watch them, especially in a rocky territory or sandy desert, full of drifts and pits. However, in order to preserve them he draws a circle around them with his staff or a sharp stone and says: "The circle of Solomon, son of David, is between us and thee [wild beast]! If thou breakest it, Allāh will break thee! *hoṭṭa slejmān eben dāūd bēnana w-bēnak w-en kaṭa'taha kaṭa'ak allāh*." This circle is also called *leḡām*.

VALUE AND USES OF CAMELS

- 231 Without camels the Bedouins could not live in the desert.
 • 51/ The she-camels give them milk all the year round; this forms
 438 the principal, and in many families the only, food for months. With the money received from the sale of camels they buy clothes, arms, and grain for both themselves and their horses. The camels they usually sell to the *fellāḥin* or to the merchants who import in caravans the various goods needed in the towns and settlements situated far from the sea or from railways; some camels are also sold for meat in Egypt and Irak. The *fellāḥin* use the camels in plowing, hauling, and threshing, for raising water, and for bringing their various products to the market. Fat she-camels more than twenty years old are bought for their flesh by the 'Aḡejl.